

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0203

USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

DOD WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USNMR SHAPE BEL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 1268

DOD PLEASE PASS ISA AND DSAA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MPOL, MILI, GW, PO

SUBJ: M-48A5 TANKS FOR PORTUGAL

REF: A) BONN 02675 (DTG 111844Z FEB 77), B) BONN 02630
(DTG 111511Z FEB 77), C) USCINCEUR 261355Z JAN 77,
D) USMISSION NATO 430 (DTG 261526Z JAN 77), E) LISBON
909 (DTG 021737Z FEB 77)

SUMMARY : EMBASSY LISBON VIEWS FRG WILLINGNESS TO SUPPLY M-48A5'S
AS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS OF PORTUGUESE FORCE MODERNIZATION PRO-
GRAM. WE BELIEVE TRAINING PROGRAM IS WELL ADVANCED, AND THAT
PORTUGUESE PROCES ARE AT POINT WHERE ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT IS
NEEDED IF THE PROMISING TREND TOWARD INCREASED PROFESSIONALISM
AND CLOSER TIES WITH NATO IS TO CONTINUE. END SUMMARY

1. EMBASSY LISBON GREATLY APPRECIATES AMBASSADOR RAISING
AGAIN WITH LEBER THE QUESTION OF TANKS. VIEWED FROM HERE,
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THESE TANKS ARE CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ENTIRE
PORTUGUESE FORCE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM.

2. REF A QUOTES LEBER AS BELIEVING PORTUGUESE ARMY (PA)
NEEDS TRAINING RATHER THAN EQUIPMENT, AND CITES FRG SKEPTICISM
ON NEED TO PROVIDE PA WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF MODERN EQUIPMENT
WE DISAGREE.

3. TRAINING:

-- PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES HAVE ALWAYS GIVEN GREAT EMPHASIS TO TRAINING. MAAG HAS HAD A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR 25 YEARS AT APPROXIMATELY 300,000 DOLLARS PER ANNUM. PORTUGUESE STUDENTS SENT TO US FOR TRAINING HAVE PROVED THEMSELVES CONSISTENTLY TO BE HIGH PERFORMERS.

-- THIS TRAINING IS REFLECTED IN HIGH CAPABILITY TO MAINTAIN EQUIPMENT. VISITORS ARE UNFAILINGLY IMPRESSED WITH FACT THAT PA HAS KEPT ABOUT 30 M-47 TANKS OPERATIONAL DESPITE TOTAL LACK OF SPARE PARTS.

-- US MOBILE TRAINING TEAMS AND SUBSEQUENT US ARMY OBSERVERS ATTEST TO THE EXCELLENT RESULTS OF THE TRAINING CARRIED OUT SINCE JUNE 1976 AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS USING THE US-SUPPLIED M-48A5'S AND APC'S. PA IS NOW TRAINING ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL UNDER ASSUMPTION PROPOSED DELIVERY SCHEDULE OF REMAINING EQUIPMENT WILL BE MET.

-- IN ADDITION TO TRAINING ON SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT, THE PA IS MOVING AHEAD ON GENERAL TRAINING FOR THE BRIGADE. FOR EXAMPLE, PERSONNEL ARE ALREADY ATTENDING US COURSES IN SUCH AREAS AS INFANTRY, ARMOUR, ARTILLERY, QUARTERMASTER ORDNANCE, SIGNAL AND ENGINEERING. THE FOLLOWING BRIGADE ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS ARE IN PLACE: BRIGADE HQ, HQ AND SERVICE COMPANY, BATTALION HQ FOR MECH BATTALION, 1ST RIFLE CO., MAINTENANCE COMPANY, AND SIGNAL PLATOON.

-- IN SUM, WE HERE DO NOT AGREE WITH LBER'S CONTENTION THAT PA IS NOT READY TO RECEIVE EQUIPMENT. THE BRIGADE PLAN PHASES IN EQUIPMENT AS TRAINING CAPACITY IMPROVES. RIGHT NOW TRAINING
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IS AHEAD OF EQUIPMENT. FURTHER PROGRESS CAN'T TAKE PLACE UNLESS URGENT EQUIPMENT NEEDS ARE MET; OUR FIVE M-48A5'S, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE NOT ENOUGH TO TRAIN THE TANKERS NEEDED FOR THE BRIGADE. A COMMANDER AND STAFF HAVE BEEN APPOINTED FOR THE ARTILLERY BATTALION, BUT THE FILLING OF THE UNITS IS AWAITING ARRIVAL OF MATERIEL.

4. AMOUNT OF MODERN EQUIPMENT: RATHER THAN PROVIDING LARGE AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT, WE BELIEVE PORTUGUESE FORCE MODERNIZATION IS A RELATIVELY MODEST PROGRAM -- THE MINIMUM NEEDED TO ENCOURAGE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LISBON 1268

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STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM THAT WILL PROVIDE THE
NECESSARY INCENTIVE FOR STABILITY, DISCIPLINE, AND CLOSER
TIES WITH NATO.

-- THE PORTUGUESE NAVY HAS BEEN TOLD TO MODERNIZE, NOT
REPLACE, ITS OLD FRIGATES.

-- THE AIR FORCE HAS DISPOSED OF ITS TWO BOEING 707'S, MAY
RECEIVE THREE C-130'S IN NEXT TWO YEARS, AND HAS RECEIVED
OBSOLESCENT G-91'S AND T-38 TRAINERS TO REPLACE EVEN
OLDER AIRCRAFT. TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN GIVEN A HIGHER
PRIORITY THAN MORE GLAMEROUS FIGHTER AIRCRAFT.

-- THE ARMY IS PROPOSING TO DROP TO 36,000 MEN AND REORGANIZE
ITSELF AROUND THE COMBINED-ARMS BRIGADE. THE BRIGADE IS TO
BE ADEQUATELY EQUIPPED FOR ITS MISSION, BUT NOT WITH
SOPHISTICATED MATERIEL. THE M-48A5 IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF
THE MODEST, BUT DURABLE, SOLUTION PROPOSED FOR THE PA
MODERNIZATION PROGRAM.

5. US TRAINING PLANS: IN RESPONSE TO BONN'S QUESTION IN
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PARA THREE REF (A), THE US CURRENTLY HAS A SMALL MAAG (8 OFFICERS)
FOR MANAGEMENT OF ONGOING US-PROVIDED TRAINING. TRAINING FOR
ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT WILL BE GIVEN ALONG SAME LINES AS WHAT
DONE TO DATE FOR BRIGADE, I.E. SHORT TERM MOBILE TRAINING
TEAMS (MTT). M-48A5'S AND M-113'S WERE ACCOMPANIED BY 15-
MAN MTT. T-38'S WERE ACCOMPANIED BY 30-MAN MTT. THIS FIELD
TRAINING WILL BE SUPPLEMENTED BY SPECIALIZED TRAINING IN US,
WITH US FORCES IN GERMANY, AND IN INSTITUTIONS AND STAFF OFFICER

TRAINING PROGRAMS IN US. THERE ARE NO PLANS TO INCREASE SIZE OF MAAG, NOR DO WE SEE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PERMANENT IN-COUNTRY TRAINING PERSONNEL.

6. TWO YEAR DELAY: REGARDING SPECIFIC QUESTION RAISED IN REF (B), TWO YEAR DELAY IN DELIVERING TANKS MENTIONED IN PARA SIX WOULD LEAD TO SERIOUS MORALE PROBLEMS HERE. ARMY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM WOULD VIRTUALLY COME TO A HALT. IN THE FACE OF ALREADY AROUSED EXPECTATIONS, SUCH A HALF COULD LEAD TO RENEWED INSTABILITY AND INCREASE THE STRENGTH OF ANTI-NATO ELEMENTS.

7. M-48A2 ACCEPTABILITY: REGARDING PARA SIX (C) OF REF B, ALL PLANNING TO DATE HAS BEEN BASED ON M-48A5. EXTENSIVE TRAINING HAS ALREADY BEEN CARRIED OUT IN US-SUPPLIED M-48A5'S. THERE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE A MAJOR SUPPLY PROBLEM IF A BASTARDIZED A2 WERE PROVIDED THE PORTUGUESE ARMY. WE ALSO NOTE USNATO DEPDEFAD'S POINT IN REF D THAT "THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAVING M-48A2 TANKS WHICH ARE SCHEDULED TO BE REPLACED, WHICH IS GERMAN SITUATION, AND RECEIVING SOMEWHAT OUTMODED TANKS WITH NO PROSPECT OF REPLACEMENT IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE, WHICH WOULD BE PORTUGUESE SITUATION.

8. CONCLUSION: GIVEN MAGNITUDE OF US PROGRAM, WITH FIVE M-48A5'S, 20 M-113A1'S, AND SIX T-38'S ALREADY DELIVERED, 30 MILLION PROPOSED FOR FY-77 SUPPLEMENTAL, AND 25 MILLION PROPOSED FOR FY-78, EMBASSY BELIEVES LEVEL OF EXPECTED CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTRIBUTION FROM FRG IS REASONABLE, EVEN MODEST. NEVERTHELESS, HOWEVER MODEST, MEANINGFUL AND RAPID GERMAN PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN MAINTAINING US CONGRESSIONAL AND ALLIED SUPPORT FOR MODERNIZATION PROGRAM.

9. WE HERE ARE VERY MUCH AWARE THAT THIS IS BUT ONE OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT ISSUES ON WHICH YOU ARE PRESSING FRG. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE M-48 ISSUE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT BOTH TO SHORT AND MEDIUM-TERM STABILITY HERE. WE VERY MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.
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